

North Somerset Council

Report to the Council

Date of Meeting: 21 February 2023

Subject of Report: Corporate Parenting

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Councillor Catherine Gibbons

Key Decision: No

Reason: Not an Executive decision

Recommendations

To note:

The participation of care experienced young people, elected members, health colleagues and officers in the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The government's response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

1. Summary of Report

This report provides two brief updates on the areas identified above.

2. Policy

A council which empowers and cares about people.

3. Details

Corporate Parenting Panel: January 2023

This panel focused on the provision of services for our young people in relation to physical health, emotional health and wellbeing. It was well attended by ten of our care experienced young people, four members (including the Leader, the lead member and the CYPS Scrutiny chairperson), two foster carers and several officers from the ICB and Children's Services. The meeting was co-facilitated by the lead member and our Young Director; it was an opportunity for our young people to tell us of their experiences, what they found helpful and what they thought could be improved. While there are recent improvements in the local CAMHS service there is increasing demand from many young people for mental health and wellbeing services at all levels of need – it is clear that the pandemic has had a significant impact on young people's education, social lives and resilience. We heard about an increase in support and training for schools and other professionals but recognised that again demand is outstripping supply.

Our young people and foster carers raised other concerns such as the lack of dental services and the need to have as up to date information as possible. It was noteworthy that during the meeting some young people had more knowledge than others about available services and we heard that the Young Director is working with others to improve the information on our 'Local Offer.'

The health professionals were able to answer many questions in the meeting and they too undertook to make available relevant information about available services, particularly in regard to access criteria.

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care

The DfE published their response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care this month and received a mixed response from a range of organisations involved in providing children's social care. The primary concerns relate to firstly the difference between the amount of funding that the review identified compared to the amount that will be allocated by the government and secondly to the pace of some of the changes, especially the proposed changes to agency worker recruitment.

DfE social care strategy:

- **Funding:** £200m in funding over two years. The care review called for £2.6bn over five years, with £1bn spent over the first two years.
- **Social work training and development:** An early career framework will be established to support social workers in the years after graduation, as recommended by the care review.
- **Social work recruitment:** Councils will be supported to recruit up to 500 more social work apprentices to help tackle staff shortages.
- **Agency social work:** The DfE will consult on reducing local authorities' reliance on agency social workers.
- **Early help:** £45m will be allocated for up to 12 'families first for children pathfinder' areas to trial the care review proposal to introduce family help services, to provide "non-judgmental", joined-up support for families affected by issues such as domestic abuse or poor mental health.
- **Child protection:** Child protection lead practitioners, who will have received "advanced specialist training", will be appointed to lead safeguarding cases in the pathfinder areas, as called for by the care review. In addition, the pathfinders will test the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's proposal to set up multi-agency teams consisting of social workers, police officers and health professionals to carry out child protection work, in order to improve practice.
- **Kinship care:** Kinship care placements will be "prioritised" by simplifying processes, while £9m will be spent on improving training and support for kinship carers. The government will also explore the case for the care review's recommendations of a financial allowance and the extension of legal aid for those who become special guardians or responsible for children through child arrangements orders.

- **Foster care:** £25m will be spent on a carer recruitment and retention programme over the next two years focused on shortage areas, such as sibling groups, teenagers, unaccompanied children, parent and child placements and children who have suffered complex trauma. The care review called for the recruitment of 9,000 carers over three years. In addition, foster carers will receive an above-inflation rise in minimum allowances to deal with rising costs.
- **Children in care and care leavers:** £30m will be spent on family finding, befriending and mentoring programmes for looked-after children and care leavers, to help them find and maintain relationships, as the care review recommended. The suggested grant made available to children leaving care will increase from £2,000 to £3,000, while the bursary for those undertaking apprenticeships will rise from £1,000 to £3,000, broadly in line with care review recommendations.
- **National standards and outcomes:** The DfE will consult on a children's social care national framework, as proposed by the review, setting expected outcomes for children and families that should be achieved by all local authorities.

4. Consultation

This report references the regular consultation that is undertaken with our children and young people in relation to improving the services they receive. It also provides feedback on the national review into Children's Social Care which undertook extensive consultation with families and professionals.

5. Financial Implications

None at present.

Costs

N/A.

Funding

N/A.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None.

8. Risk Management

N/A.

9. Equality Implications

No.

10. Corporate Implications

None.

11. Options Considered

None.

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Appendices:

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Background Papers:

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